The Seven Dolors of the Virgin Mary

by

Eliza Allen Starr

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O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.—*The Lamentations of Jeremiah Chapter 1; v. 12.*

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TO THE

BELOVED SISTERS OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

IN WHOSE

MOTHER HOUSE OF SAINT MARY'S

I LEARNED THE LESSON OF COMPASSION FOR THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY IN

HER DOLORS,

THESE PAGES ARE MOST AFFECTIONATELY AND GRATEFULLY DEDICATED

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Preface

While several Orders have embodied in their rule a devout remembrance of the Sorrows of Our Lady, the Blessed Virgin Mary, two, in a most special manner, have associated themselves to these Sorrows by a daily recitation of the Beads on which her Sorrows, or Dolors, are commemorated, and by certain badges which keep these Dolors uppermost in the minds, as they are always visible to the eyes of the members of their Order, congregation or community.

Of these two, we make mention, first, of the Order of Servites, which in both its male and female branches, makes a daily commemoration of the Seven Dolors of the Blessed Virgin in its stated devotions, while all wear the Scapular, carry and recite the Beads of the Seven Dolors of the Blessed Virgin Mary in such a manner as to make the devotion to these Seven Dolors one of the marks of the Order.

Our second mention is that of the Congregation of the Holy Cross, in which this devotion to the Seven Dolors of the Blessed Virgin, is even more pronounced than in the Order of the Servites. All the Sisters of the Holy Cross receive "The Seven Dolor Beads" with their cord and habit as novices, and the professed Sisters receive, as their insignia, a silver heart worn outside the habit, on which Our Lady of Seven Dolors is represented in high relief; while their two patronal feasts are the "Compassion of the Blessed Virgin Mary," on the Friday of Passion week, and "The Seven Dolors of the Blessed Virgin Mary," on the Third Sunday of September.

The Seven Dolor Beads are worn outside the habit, and it is one of these large black beads that every Sister touches, instinctively, when there is a need of special, instant prayer, and at the side of the sick and of the dying. During our last war, many a dying soldier in tent, in hospital or on the field, learned the power of these beads to sustain and bring the graces so sharply needed, "Our Lady of the Seven Dolors" becoming one of the watchwords wherever a Sister of the Holy Cross was at hand; and—where was she not?

This chaplet of the Seven Dolors, consists

strictly of a crucifix and seven septaines of beads; each septaine made up of one bead on which is said the "Our Father," and seven on which are said the "Hail Mary;" these seven septaines commemorating the Seven Dolors of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The recitation of the chaplet, begins with an invocation to the Holy Ghost, to which succeeds the recitation of the seven septaines with a devout meditation upon each of the Seven Dolors commemorated upon them. At their close, the Hail Mary is said three times on the three beads between the crucifix and the septaines, in veneration for the tears which Mary shed in her sorrows, and with a most tender compassion for them; thereby to obtain a true sorrow for our sins, which were the real causes of her sorrows.

It is unnecessary to dwell upon the influence of a lifelong devotion like this of the Seven Dolor Beads. The little book which we now present to our readers is the fruit of the recitation of these beads, given to us by Mother Angela of the Congregation of the Holy Cross, at Saint Mary's, Notre Dame, Indiana, and in the use of which we were instructed by Sister Angeline of the same beloved community. Both these dear friends lie in the Sacred Acre of the Convent

of Saint Mary's, and, closely associated as they are with our Beads, can be mentioned by name in our Preface.

The seven chapters or divisions of our little book appeared in the columns of the *Ave Maria*, and it is by the courtesy of its editor, Rev. Daniel E. Hudson, that we are permitted to publish them in their present form, which we do, in order so to present this devotion to the minds and hearts and imaginations of good women in the world, as well as in convents, as to be a source of heavenly-mindedness at all times, of strength in seasons of trial, nourishing a lively sympathy with and a most tender compassion for that Mother of Sorrows, who is also the Consolation of the Afflicted.

Saint Joseph's Cottage,
Feast of the Compassion,
1898.

RAPHAEL

THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE

I.—The Presentation in the Temple

Like a budding almond branch on which has fallen the light snows of February, comes the double feast of the Presentation and of the Purification. "The lonely heights of Mary's holiness," on which a Saint Jerome meditated with rapture, are tinged, to-day, like snowy Alpine summits at dawn, with the warmth of maternal love. She knows, this Maiden-Mother of the lineage of David, that she is returning to those who blessed her on the day of her espousals, crowned as a mother only is crowned,—returning to those under whose eye she conned the prophecies, and who are still "looking for the redemption of Israel." She knows they will welcome her first-born Son with unspeakable tenderness, unspeakable joy; but will they recognize the Redeemer, promised

for four thousand years, in the Babe nestling to her breast, cradled on her arm?

What could be more tenderly beautiful, more tenderly joyful, than Mary as she stands before the benign high-priest; while Joseph, her spouse, stands beside her, bearing the two turtle-doves which are to redeem this first-born Son as, truly, a Son of Abraham? But the question still rises in her heart, "Will they recognize Him who has been promised?" when a wave of awe, as profound as her joys, floods her soul, thrills every faculty of her mind, as, moving forth from the deep shadows of the porticos of the Temple, comes the aged Simeon—a man upon whom all Israel looks with a hush of veneration; for to him it has been promised that he "shall not see death before he has seen the Christ of the Lord." And now he advances to the little group of Mary and Joseph; and, taking the Child into his arms, he breaks forth into a hymn of praise, blessing God and saying:

"Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace;

because my eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to the revelation of the Gentiles and to the glory of Thy people, Israel."

Close upon the steps of Simeon comes the prophetess Anna, giving praise to God, and "speaking of the Child to all who are looking for the redemption of Israel." And the holy radiance of Mary's face takes on a rapture which says: "They have seen Him who was to come!"

Ages on ages have come and gone, eternal cycles have been entered upon; but Mary never has forgotten, never will forget, that moment of holy exultation in her virginal maternity! It is the voice of Simeon which breaks in upon the trance of bliss into which this double recognition of her Son, as truly the Messiah of God, has thrown her soul,—the voice of Simeon, as he spreads his aged hands over this group of three and blesses them; then speaks to Mary, still folding her Son to her heart, as if a new inspiration had come to his soul:

"Behold, this Child is set for the ruin and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed."

O brief moment of perfect joy—a joy born of heaven without one alloy of earth, and yet as transient as mortal air could make it!

The delicacy with which this narrative is limned by the pen of the Evangelist, Saint Luke, and the tender significance of this first sorrow in the life of the Blessed Virgin, gave this subject a place in the series upon series in the early catacombs. For, contrary to the impression fixed in the minds of so many even among Catholics, the incidents connected with the infancy and childhood of our Lord were dwelt upon by the Christian artists, who wrought out their pious conceptions of these events on the stucco laid over tufa walls before the year 200, or even 100, of the Christian era, in the underground cemetery of a Saint Priscilla or Saint Domitilla, Pretextatus or Saturninus; precisely as,

in later centuries, the apses of the Middle Age churches were enriched by them to the admiration of our own times.

It was from these series of paintings, especially those in Saint Priscilla's Catacomb, in which he was deposited after his death, that Celestine I. caught the inspiration which led him to plan their reproduction on the Arch of Triumph in Santa Maria Maggiore —a plan carried out by his successor, Sixtus III. On this Arch of Triumph the narrative of Saint Luke concerning the Presentation of our Lord in the Temple has been set in the most delicately tinted mosaic, with a vivacity which delights us. The whole scene is enacted in a portico of the Temple. We see Mary, richly attired, bearing her Infant in her arms, Saint Joseph at her side, standing before the high-priest, who is followed by other priests; and toward them are hastening the aged Simeon and devout Anna; while doves and pigeons, in allusion to the modest offering of Saint Joseph, are seen in a flock at one side. This is on the upper line of scenes represented on the arch opposite the

Annunciation, showing how conspicuously the event shone forth to the minds of those Christians of the fifth century; all of which is sustained by the importance given to the festival itself.

We find in Martigny's "Dictionnaire des Antiquités Chrétiennes," under the head of "Immovable Feasts," that "on the 2d of February a feast is celebrated which, in all the martyrologies of the Latins, is entitled *Purificatio S. Mariæ Virginis, et Hipapanti Domini nostri*. By this last title, the Greeks designed to keep in memory the meeting of Simeon with our Lord in the Temple. The institution of this festival mounts to the highest antiquity; is distinctly mentioned by Saint Gregory of Nyssa (A.D. 396), and by many other Fathers, whose testimony is united by the Bollandists; and there are very ancient formulas for the blessing of the candles;" by which quotation we see how much stress was laid upon Simeon's recognition of Our Lord, and, we must infer, upon his prophecy of sorrow to Our Lady.

The Byzantine period has left one of its

most interesting compositions to illustrate the Presentation. The aged Simeon, standing on a small dais, holds the Divine Child on his hands, as if returning Him to His Mother, toward whom He is stretching forth one little hand; and the Mother responds by extending her own to Him. Saint Joseph bears the turtle-doves at her side; while Saint Anna is seen over the bowed shoulders of Simeon, her hands raised, as if in joy and admiration.

But in the series of pictures representing the life of the Blessed Virgin by Giotto, in the Church of Saint Francis at Assisi, one of his loveliest groups displays the Presentation. The architecture of the Temple's interior affords an imposing background, with every possible adornment; and the grouping is arranged, symmetrically indeed, but effectively. The venerable Simeon, with eyes raised to heaven in thanksgiving, bears the Child in his arms with exceeding love; while the Babe leans toward its Mother, who stands with outstretched hands to receive Him. Immediately at her side are Saint Joseph and

several persons, old and young, attracted by an incident certainly not uncommon, excepting for the remarkable circumstances attending it; for near to Simeon is the prophetess Anna, who is addressing, most earnestly, another group of thoughtful persons; while one has prostrated herself, with her hands stretched forth toward the Child, as if welcoming the Redeemer of Israel. The whole is in Giotto's best manner, without a trace of Byzantine formality.

From this time, every series illustrating the life of the Blessed Virgin—as the twenty-eight compartments in the sanctuary of the Cathedral of Orvieto, or the series by Duccio of Siena—may be understood as giving the Presentation. The German schools do not neglect it; and Van Eyck gives an elegant version of the story without neglecting a single circumstance mentioned in the Scripture narrative. Most certainly we may expect to see it in the several series painted by the immortal Fra Angelico, not only in his choral books and in the cells of San Marco, but on

the presses of the sacristy of the Camaldoline convent; and we do find it.

The ornate arches of Giotto's interior give place to a long avenue of columns, supporting narrow, round arches, which reminds one of a monastic ambulatory, and giving one also a feeling of the deepest serenity. There are no groups in waiting, no lookers-on. Simeon holds the Child—more than this, presses Him to his cheek; wraps Him, as it were, with his aged hands. One can hear him, in tremulous notes, chanting his *Dimittis*. The Child does not turn from him, as in the picture by Giotto or Van Eyck, in fear; but nestles to the wrinkled cheek, and His eyes almost close under the soothing pressure of that holy embrace. Mary's hands are raised, not to call Him to her, but as if she had just laid her Treasure into Simeon's waiting arms; and her look is one of peace. At her side, or rather following her, is Saint Joseph with the turtle-doves, a sweet smile on his face; for he hears only the welcome given to the Babe, sees only the love which greets Him.

Opposite this group we see Anna, hastening forward, her hands joined in rapture, declaring the coming of Him for whom all Israel is waiting. It is never quite safe to say where the charm lies in one of the Angelical's compositions; for the charm is over it as a whole, by reason of the spirit which inspired it. One thing is certain: Fra Angelico could never overlook Mary's part in the prophecy, "A light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people, Israel;" followed by those words which never ceased to echo in her heart: "Behold, this Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce." Simeon knew, when he uttered these words, that the sword at that very moment pierced the Heart of Mary. Fra Angelico feels this—feels that the tender joy which was so justly hers, as we should say, had been disturbed, never more to rest; and all that sympathy which people of the world, even, feel for a first grief, was in the soul of the Angelical.

Therefore, while he gives her an expression of peace, it is the peace of perfect resignation; the repeating of that word by which she accepted her part in the mystery of the Incarnation—"Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to Thy word."

Fra Bartolomeo was a monk, a Dominican monk; but how differently than to the Angelical this scene came before his mind's eye! The Divine Child, in all His beauty, is held on Simeon's arms; one foot rests in Mary's loving palm, and He looks out on the world with one hand raised in blessing, the other on His baby-breast—an enchanting picture of infancy, and that a Divine Infancy. Saint Joseph bears the turtle-doves most gently; one sees also the kneeling figure of a nun; another figure, standing with an aureole, may be Saint Anna. Simeon himself is most benign, but his eyes look into Mary's as if he were at this very moment speaking to her of this Child, to be "the fall and resurrection of many in Israel, a sign which shall be contradicted;" while "the sword is to pierce

her own soul also;" for there is compassion on his face, and on Mary's the tenderest shade of sorrow.

In a niche on the wall we see Moses with his horns of power, and a scroll in hand, on which is the command which Mary has obeyed with such simplicity, as if she had needed purification after giving birth to the Redeemer who had saved her, from the first moment of her own conception, from any shadow of sin. The picture itself is one of consummate skill, of the most beautiful technique and delicate sentiment; one on which rests the fame of the brother-monk of Fra Angelico and worthy of San Marco.

In the Vatican Gallery is one of Raphael's youthful conceptions, a "Coronation of the Blessed Virgin;" her empty tomb, filled with growing lilies and roses, around which stand the Apostles, wondering. This picture had three smaller pictures attached to it as a *predella*, or footstool; and one of these gave the Presentation and Purification under a portico of the Temple, with a vista leading to its very interior. When the still young

Raphael went to Rome at the call of Julius II., he must have felt a little like wondering at himself to find that he had represented this event more according to the idea of the old artist who had put it in mosaic on the Arch of Triumph in Santa Maria Maggiore, than like any other picture he had ever seen. It is, in fact, wonderfully like while unlike.

The central group gives us the high-priest, who is returning the Child to His Mother, having "done for Him according to the law." Opposite Blessed Mary stands Simeon; and the eyes of the high-priest, like those of Simeon, are bent upon her with the tenderest compassion, while the Child goes to her grieved, and she receives Him grieving. One little hand touches her bosom, the other is raised as if to console her,—as if He were saying: "I know you are grieved for Me, that I must be a contradiction to My generation, a word to be spoken against. And I, My Mother, grieve for you." Never, in one of the school of Siena's tenderest pictures, was there a more sympathetic look

between Son and Mother than in this early picture by Raphael.

I often think this Sorrow, or Dolor, might be made the special devotion of the young. How often I have heard them say, how often when young have I said myself: "If I could only know what to expect!" Everything in the prophecy of Simeon is vague. The when, the how, the what, utterly indefinite—not even an outline to shadow forth its possible circumstances; lying off on the dim horizon, ready to assume shapes too dreadful to imagine. The first sorrow, the altogether indefinite sorrow, it belongs to the young to compassionate Our Lady with all the tenderness and sympathy so natural to youthful, untried hearts. To carry out this idea, the personages on either side of Raphael's central group are young—at least none are old; and all seem to partake, by their pensive expression, in this first grief of the Mother of a Babe so lovely as to stir envy in all who behold Him.

So far from giving every attractive example of the treatment of this Dolor in art,

we have chosen those only which were most significant as to date or character. The subject has never lost its charm for great artists: for those whose inspirations are drawn from sources rich in associations teeming with thought. In our own age, "The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple" has made one of Overbeck's immortal illustrations, forty in number, which should be the treasure-trove of every institution for the young, pouring over the Sacred Text floods of a right understanding and a beauty-loving erudition.

Three arcades, through which come charming distances, frame in the principal group with its accessories. Strongly relieved against the open sky, stands Simeon, bowed with years, bearing lovingly on his arms the gracious Child, and looking adoringly into His eyes; singing softly, as if to himself, his *Dimittis*. Two young girls kneel before this seemingly temporary altar on which are offered the oblations of the first-born in Israel,—one bearing the turtle-doves, the other a lighted taper. And Mary, Virgin-Mother? Her hands in the mantle that

wraps her whole figure, leaving only the beautiful, tender, virgin face, bending pensively like a lily on its stem, the bright aureole over her head, standing between the whole world, which is to contradict Him, and her Divine Son,—shielding the whole group, as it were, by the majesty of her first Dolor!

We see Anna, the aged prophetess, approaching Simeon, her lifted hands welcoming the promised Deliverer of His people; we see groups of mothers and beautiful children. But Mary sees no one: her first Dolor wraps her as closely as does her blue mantle.

FRA ANGELICO

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

II.—The Flight into Egypt

Our Second Dolor is heralded by a pageant and a tragedy, and neither pageant nor tragedy can be overlooked in its contemplation. The vision of three Wise Men, who were kings as well, crossing the desert on their camels, led by an inspiration from heaven to seek Him whose coming was to be heralded by a star, and that star burning steadily in the clear sky of the Orient with a brilliancy altogether unheard of; the visit of these three Wise Men, kings as well, to Herod, King of Judah, in the holy city of Jerusalem; and, obedient to the prophecies, turning to the little town of Bethlehem, there to find the One whom they sought, not in kingly state, but lying in a manger; there, also, to offer to this Babe of days their precious gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, —the whole has passed into the poetry and

the art of all succeeding ages, and even into modern story.

We speak literally when we say of all succeeding ages. It was one of the favorite subjects of the first, second and third centuries on the walls of catacomb chambers; and when the Arch of Triumph lifted its head in Santa Maria Maggiore, our three Kings were there, and so was the star, and so were Herod and the unwilling readers of holy prophecy; and the Divine Babe was there receiving their gifts. And the tragedy was there also; and the wail of the Bethlehem infants and the frantic cries of their mothers were lifted up in testimony to the Incarnation, to which the whole arch is a monument.

But our actual dolor, "The Flight," was not one to be treated easily in mosaic. Landscapes at that early time were very rarely attempted, and had little interest for the primitive Christians, whose minds were so seriously occupied by the fundamental dogmas of a religion for which they might at any time be called to die. The accesso-

ries, therefore, of "The Flight" being technically difficult, they included all its significance in those graphic representations, of the Murder of the Holy Innocents, which are still to be found among the cathedral treasures of Southern Europe.

We cannot suppose Our Lady to have been actually present at any of those scenes so brutally enacted at the command of Herod; but that visit of the angel to Saint Joseph in his sleep, saying, "Arise, and take the Child and His Mother, and fly into Egypt; and be there until I shall tell thee; for it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him," opened to Mary all the possibilities of the danger before her. Saint Matthew is the only one of the Evangelists to give this narrative; but it is told by him so circumstantially, that this Second Dolor stands as sharply defined as Simeon's prophecy was vague, and which she now reads with an awful sense of what is still to come.

Archbishop Kenrick, in his note upon this passage in Saint Matthew's Gospel, says: "It is probable that immediately after

their (*i. e.*, the Wise Men's) departure, the Child was brought to Jerusalem to be presented in the Temple." Then, in another note following immediately, he says of the dream: "This took place probably as Joseph, after the presentation, was on his way to Nazareth." The Gospel tells us that he arose and "took the Child and His Mother by night, and retired into Egypt."

This subject could not fail to have been treated in the miniatures which illustrated so lavishly and so touchingly all the choir books of the Middle Age monasteries; and even in the large representations of the Murder of the Holy Innocents it comes into the backgrounds, especially in architectural decorations of churches dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, as Notre Dame de Chartres; and in Mrs. Jameson's "Legends of the Madonna" we are told, in a note, that it is "conspicuously and elegantly treated over the door of the Lorenz Kirche at Nuremberg;" indicated, as she remarks, rather than represented.

But while we are preparing ourselves for

disappointment in our search for early representations of this dolor in its entirety, we find to our delight, in spite of technical difficulties as to mosaic, the whole story, pageant, tragedy, and flight, beautifully given in the second row of mosaics encrusting the domed ceiling of the ancient baptistery of Florence. These wonderful mosaics date to the year 1213, and were begun by Andrea Tafi, assisted by Gaddo Gaddi, a friend of Cimabue; and by Apollonio, a Greek master, under whom both Andrea Tafi and Gaddo Gaddi had learned their art. This row begins with the Annunciation to Our Lady, the Visitation to Saint Elizabeth, the Nativity; and next comes the visit of the Magi, their dream in which they are warned to return another way into their own country, which they do in a sail-boat; then the Presentation in the Temple followed by Saint Joseph's Dream, in which an angel communicates the danger awaiting the Holy Child, and the actual Flight. The gentle animal on which Our Lady is seated with her Child is led by an angel, but the Child Himself stands on

His Mother's knee and points the way, while Saint Joseph follows the holy group; and the Murder of the Innocents occupies the next compartment. The vivacity with which these groups are executed would make them perfectly intelligible to a child.

Still, the event can hardly be said to have been treated as a dolor, except in choir books, before the year 1400—that century in which rare tenderness of devotion quickened the imaginations of so many gifted sons of Italy. It is on the wall of a cell in the Monastery of San Marco, Florence, that we find our Flight treated as a dolor, with no other idea in mind; for it was painted there by the hand of the Angelical Brother who painted but for one purpose on these convent walls—which was to assist the meditations of the Brothers who dwelt there, whose lives were shaped and colored by the indwelling thought, not by the execution of the picture whatever it might be.

And what is this picture which, in despite of four centuries, keeps its place in every work of art, and challenges the critic with

any or all of its imperfections? A barren landscape, hills and valleys, with here and there an abode more or less humble, and far off a line of the sea; just four trees, shaped for all the world like the toy trees of a child's Christmas-box. Edging the path is delicate herbage, as if it had sprung up at the moment from the atmosphere of this group; and close to us the barest outline of a mouse-colored donkey, such as we see in Italy, but living and moving, and intent on accomplishing his journey. No bridle, no rein of any sort; but we know the donkey is on the right path, that he will not falter or need urging or stumble; for on his back is seated the gentlest rider that a donkey ever bore,—the gentlest rider and the most wonderful; for she is a Virgin-Mother, and she holds to her cheek, without a thought of aught else in the world, the promised One of Israel, the Messias of her people; the Redeemer of the whole human race, foretold to Adam and Eve even after their sin, and now come; the very Word Himself made flesh and committed to her arms, while the

nation that should welcome Him and the king who should bow down to Him are seeking His life. Her soul is utterly abandoned to this one thought, all the instincts of motherhood inspiring her to shield Him, while the tender face is calm even in the anguish of her heart; and this anguish to be divined only by a gentle lifting of the eyes heavenward, and a pressure, which we feel rather than see, of the hands that hold her Babe to her cheek; while the Infant looks into His Mother's face with a confidence which assures her that all will be well.

Saint Joseph follows with a step as firm, as untiring as that of the patient animal that needs no urging. The white locks fall in waves on his shoulders from under a close cap; but the simplicity of the drawing gives us a deep, far-seeing eye, and the profile of a face as intelligent in heavenly things as it is benign. He carries, on a stick over his shoulder, the garments for his family, and in his hands certain utensils which you know will be used when they pause to rest. The soul of the picture could be given in a cir-

cle which would enclose the head of the Mother, of the Child, and the encircling arms and hands. The terror which seized her when Joseph gently roused her from her sleep, told her of the vision and of the command, still freezes her; we see that she has but one care—to shield her Infant from "the terrors of the way."

A more direct contrast to this conception of our dolor could not be found than "The Flight," by Titian. A glorious landscape, umbrageous trees, a beautiful Mother and sleeping Babe, a foster-father; but, nearly lost in the magnificence of the landscape as they are, we feel that they were introduced as an after-thought, to give significance and perhaps tenderness to the scene. It is the world's way of looking at all these events simply as events and circumstances pointing the story. Pinturicchio, in one of his pictures in Sant' Onofrio, Rome, has rendered the Flight with all the hurry and trepidation which is usually seen in figures fleeing from imminent danger of any sort; and in the background we see the

brutal Murder of the Innocents and the distracted mothers. Guido represents the Holy Family flying on foot; while Nicolas Poussin embarks them in a row-boat, with angels in the air bearing a cross.

We turn from all these—for our dolor is not to be found in them—and come to an artist in our own century who has given this dolor in all the supernatural environment that belongs to it, and with a charm which should convince us, once for all, that it is not the century in which we find a picture, nor the technique, however perfect, which has produced it, which makes its value (and this not only for one age but for all time), but the mind which has meditated upon, the soul which has apprehended, actually laid hold of the mystery contained in the event; and the sensibility which has come in touch with the subtlest chords in the human Heart of Mary, the human Heart of Jesus Himself. Only by a transporting of one's whole self into this subject can any artist in the least hope to put before our eyes what the Flight really was as an event even, and what it will con-

tinue to be as a dolor so long as there is one heart left on earth to compassionate that Mother guarding her Divine Infant with her virginal arms from "the terrors of the way."

These two precious pictures are included by Overbeck in his "Forty Illustrations of the Four Gospels." The first of these two gives us the Dream. This Holy Family, whose never-to-be-spoken joy had come to it in the Stable of Bethlehem, had paused for the night, it would seem, in another stable, or perhaps courtyard accessible to travellers; for we discern faintly the patient donkey unbridled at his crib in the background; while sitting on the bare floor, supported by the wall, we see Saint Joseph, his staff in his hand, in a deep sleep; made apparent by the one hand hanging limp over his knees, and by the very soles of the feet pressing on the floor, supporting him equally with the wall; a deep, deep sleep. Opposite Saint Joseph, sitting also on the bare floor, is the Virgin-Mother just leaning against the wall, one foot partly beyond her robe, the head under its mantle bent until the cheek touches the

head of her Child; a very brooding of the nestling, folded—O how closely!—in her arms; one hand of exquisite grace sustaining her elbow, to make a cradle for her darling, her first-born, of whom no slumber can make her, for one instant, unconscious. Near Saint Joseph, on a rude block of stone, stands a lamp.

But what apparition is this flooding the bare stable with a heavenly radiance? An angel, fair and strong, vested, girded and winged, bends in haste over Saint Joseph; one hand points downward to the sleeping Mother and her Babe; the other, with a wonderfully speaking gesture, points outward and onward; and just outside the open wall we see the Mother and her still sleeping Babe, placed by Joseph's strong and gentle arms on the donkey. Above them is the fragment of an arch; and still above, in the clear, wintry air of a February night, is the crescent moon. We understand it all. Joseph, roused at once from his deep sleep, knew that he had seen a vision, understood the voice, the command. The donkey was

led from his crib; the Mother was roused without awakening the Child, and placed securely on his back, and the flight was begun; a flight, because made suddenly but without any trepidation; and we expect to see them—just as we do see them afterward, by the hand of the Angelical Brother on the wall of a cell in San Marco—two scenes in one act.

But our second picture? Nothing that we can recall in all the representations of the Murdered Innocents in the least equals the heartbreak of this scene. The little ones are dead,—and so beautiful in death that the hymn of Prudentius, of the fourth century, comes to mind:

Ye lovely flowers of martyrs, hail!

Two lie directly before us like twins, one over the other; but the group of six mothers fills the foreground. One bears her dead infant on her knees, with uplifted arms; another buries her face, but she cannot bury her grief, in her hands; a third throws herself on the ground over her dead child and

bewails him, with such tears as angels only can dry; a fourth lays the little lifeless face to her cheek, as if trying to bring it back to life by her caresses; but the fifth, her back toward us, sees her child dead, does not touch him, but mourns, with one hand to her tortured brain, the other hanging listlessly over the little form on the ground before her; and a sixth we see rushing off in wild despair, her hands to her ears as if to forget the death-wail of her darling.

All this in the foreground. But a middle distance comes in, the court of the Temple it might be; and up the many steps flies a mother, her child hugged frantically to her shoulder, and pursued by a murderer, who actually clutches her robe, threatens the child with his dagger; and still higher, within the portico, is another, whose child has been wrenched from her by one foot, but clinging to it still even while the murderous wound is being given.

Quite to the left stretches a line of arches, and we see—what? The Virgin-Mother closely veiled, looking neither to the right

nor to the left, her Babe held close to her cheek; the donkey ambling gently, without rein or bridle, through one of the arches; Saint Joseph following, as if the wind stirred his mantle, a bundle over his shoulder, and looking backward. O Virgin-Mother, have you heard the cry of one of these murdered Innocents, the wail of one of these mothers? And do you bear in your compassionate Heart, adding still another pang to your own dolor, the sorrows of the mothers of Bethlehem, while knowing that you are saving, by your flight, their Redeemer and your own?

III.—The Three Days' Loss

The pain of pains, whether—as Dante puts such comparisons—a man measures himself by himself or measures himself with God,—still the pain of pains is the mystery of our Third Dolor; for it is the pain of loss. It was the dread of loss which had made the anguish of the Flight; but to this had succeeded the peaceful sojourn in Egypt, even if it were an exile. When the angel appeared again to Saint Joseph, it was to assure him that they were "dead who sought the life of the Child," and the Holy Family took its way, according to his command, to the land of Israel and to Nazareth, its peaceful hills and valleys not more peaceful than the gentle tenor of these three holy lives.

The bliss of these years has inspired many a Christian artist to give the lovely intercourse not only between Jesus, Mary and

OVERBECK

THE THREE DAYS' LOSS

Joseph, but with Elizabeth and the young John the Baptist and Zachary,—all of whom had been included in the events connected with the Incarnation, as recorded by Saint Matthew and Saint Luke, so that a peculiar oneness of thought must have made their intercourse second only to that of the blessed in heaven.

Beautiful and most peaceful these years certainly were; but more to Mary than any joy of occupation, even with her Son, must have been that of watching from week to week, from month to month, from year to year, the unfolding of the Godhead in the manhood, in a way strictly according to the laws of increasing intelligence with children, yet so marvellous as to fill the soul of the Mother with continual and delightful astonishment. It was the blossoming time of that Mother's life. Thoughts of danger must have been lulled; a sense of security must have relieved the tension of soul and of body; and when the time came for her grave and beautiful Boy to accompany Joseph and herself to Jerusalem, she must have

looked forward to that journey and to His first appearance in the Temple since His presentation.

That presentation! O Virgin-Mother! did no shadow pass over thy soul, like those which chase each other over verdant meadows and fields of waving grain, from we know not what, unless from the dreamy clouds of the welkin? Mary could not forget Simeon's prophecy, and, as she neared the Temple with this Son of twelve years at her side, the natural exultation of the Mother's heart must have died out, if only for the instant; and Simeon's aged face and trembling voice must have come, for that instant, between her and the radiant Being whose hand was held so dutifully, so lovingly, within her own.

Seven days—filled, as none of Mary's days had ever before been filled, by contact with noisy crowds,—completed the sojourn of the Holy Family in Jerusalem, as it did of all the devout Jews, who had come from every part of the civilized world, to keep the Feast of the Passover. The streets were thronged,

so were the gates. For one instant her Boy was missing—carried from His place, as she supposed, by the crushing multitudes. She would see Him when they had passed the gates, she said to herself, and Joseph assured her of this also. But the gates were passed; every living being must have been pressed through by the weight of multitudes thronging from the rear; and it was not possible to turn back, or go to the right or to the left: they must simply drift with the strong tide.

Their caravan, which was from Galilee, was made up of several thousand persons; so that when they were again on the highway it was still impossible to seek for any missing member of a family; and as it was then noontide, they must be content to wait until the caravan paused for the night, as it did, we are told by an ancient tradition, at Beëroth.

But although a diligent, and very soon an agonized, search was made for the Boy Jesus; and while, as on all such occasions, every one was eager to find the missing Child, no trace could be found of Him. No one could remember having seen Him after the first

ranging of the family in the band to which they naturally belonged. "We have sought Him," they said sorrowfully to each other, "among all our kinsfolk and acquaintances; He must have remained in Jerusalem."

The earliest dawn saw them in the Holy City, threading the same streets through which they had walked with Him, hand in hand, on their departure; to the very house where they had found hospitality during their sojourn of seven days; but the Boy Jesus was not there—had not been there since leaving. One street after another, one locality after another, drew them, they hardly knew why, until Mary, no longer able to contain herself, asked every one they met if he had not seen a beautiful Boy of twelve years,—more beautiful, she would add, than any of the children of men. They even made their way to the Temple, now almost deserted; but when they found Him not, the weary search from house to house began. There were few in Jerusalem who had not seen the anxious but still gentle face of the young Mother from Nazareth who had lost her Son; nor

did the accents of her voice cease to echo in their hearts even when they had passed her by, and a sympathetic tone came into the harshest voice with the "Nay, good woman, we have not seen thy Son."

In vain did Joseph try to persuade her to take some rest, some nourishment; for what could rest her or what could nourish her when not only the light of her eyes, the sun of her soul, had been taken from her, but the Hope of Israel, who had been confided to her—the very Son of the Most High, who had taken flesh of her; He who had created her, had come to redeem her, with all the souls that had lived, still lived, were ever to live on this earth? The infinite magnitude of the possession, the infinite magnitude of the loss, surpassing mortal understanding! —even Saint Joseph, with the infused perception of spiritual things, which came from his intimacy with Jesus, could not fathom the agony of her search for this infinite trust committed to her care, of all the daughters of Eve.

Jerusalem had been searched with eyes

keener than lamps. Once more would she go to the Temple. Could one so gentle, so considerate, resist the drawings of her heart any more than the steel can resist the loadstone? She was confident that He had hidden Himself from her—for what reason she did not seek an answer. It was enough for her that He had withdrawn Himself from her; that she was to seek Him until she found Him. Never had the fifteen steps to the Temple seemed to her so long, and a dizzy faintness came over her at the last; for, if He were not there, whither should she go?

The first court was passed; but "on Sabbath days the Jewish doctors were accustomed to meet in one of the lofty halls of the Temple, there to solve any difficulties occurring in the interpretation of the Law. In the time of the Pasch, particularly, when Jews from all over the world flocked to Jerusalem, there were throngs about these far-famed masters, eager to be instructed by them."* To this hall pressed forward Mary,

*See "La Vie de N. S. Jésus Christ." By Abbé Fouard. Translated into English by George F. X. Griffith.

followed by her faithful spouse; and as she entered the door, what sight met her eyes? Truly her grief, her solicitude, must be measured by her joy; for there, in the midst of the great doctors of her nation, all looking eagerly into His face, all listening with rapt attention to the words which came from His lips, was her beloved Son!

Never had that face been so radiant even to the eyes of Mary; never had that voice so transported her soul. A majesty, hitherto restrained, uplifted His whole being, yet took nothing from its divine modesty. Asking questions, listening to their solving,—the very question was an instruction, and floods of light poured over the minds of the grave doctors to whom the questions were propounded. It was another stride onward in the manifestation of the divinity. Mary understood it all now, but her heart was still sore; the ache had not yet died out; and, advancing with Saint Joseph at her side, she stood before the teacher in all the plentitude of her Divine Motherhood, breathing rather than speaking: "Son, why hast Thou done

so to us? behold Thy father and I have sought Thee, sorrowing."

Dante, in the fifteenth canto of his "Purgatory," brings this scene before us as one of those sculptured on the marble walls illustrating sweet Patience:

. . . . I saw we had attained
Another terrace; whence I speech restrained.
There by an ecstatic vision rapt away
I suddenly seemed; and, 'neath a temple's dome,
A crowd I saw of many people come;
And, at the door, a dame, whose sweet, mild way
Was that a mother hath, and soft and low.
"Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? For lo,
Sorrowing Thy father and myself," she said,
"Were seeking for Thee." More she did not say."*

Dante and Giotto were school-fellows, and much that Dante put in verse our Giotto painted. This scene he placed on the walls of the famous Arena Chapel at Padua. Jesus strictly as the Boy Jesus, is seated on a high

*See Wilstach's Translation.

bench. We see His profile only; one hand holds His mantle, the other arm is outstretched to the doctor nearest to Him, toward whom He leans, with a gentle persuasiveness in which there is majesty as well. Advancing toward the group of doctors, we see Mary, her face still wearing the traces of her sorrowful search, both hands extended toward her Child; the star on the shoulder of her mantle, and beside her is Joseph. Not one strained gesture, not one line of enforced majesty; but the sorrow is there as well as the joy, and the Boy Jesus is instructing even while He asks questions.

A charming picture by Spagnoletto, in the Vienna gallery, preserves the youthful gentleness of the Divine Boy. The beautiful, eager face, the boyish curls, the hand grasping the arm of the chair, from which He has half risen, and this arm a bit of choice carving—an eagle's bent head,—the right arm and index finger raised heavenward as He inclines toward a turbaned doctor earnestly scanning the pages of a book resting on the table, around whom are five magnificent

heads of doctors, earnest also, and seventeen press forward at the rear. But at His side we can see the head of the Virgin-Mother, and also of Saint Joseph, both of a noble type, and Joseph's staff just visible, the whole full of the true spirit of the scene.

Among the Düsseldorf series of religious prints is a very beautiful one after Ittenbach. The youthful Christ, gentle, modest, is seated on a bench of honor, His feet on a stool on the raised dais; in His hand a roll, and the right hand and index finger slightly raised as if by the energy of speaking. Eight doctors are standing or seated on low benches around Him, but one is deeply in earnest, and is drawing out answers to his questions from the Child, who is listened to with admiration. Upon this scene appears the Mother Mary, ecstatic with joy, yet bearing traces of her grief, as well as Saint Joseph, and both are so demonstrative as to cause one of the grave doctors to turn his eyes upon them. A tender, reverential feeling runs through the picture, and the spontaneous action of the Blessed Virgin and of Saint Joseph is pre-

cisely what we ourselves would imagine after this three days' loss.

Overbeck has given two renderings of this scene; but the one in his "Forty Illustrations of the Four Gospels" seems to us to have been inspired by a deeper, sweeter feeling than the other; although, evidently, the same conception runs through both. In this the Divine Child is even younger than in the first, still seated on the heavy tomes; but He has turned from one eager, impatient questioner to listen to another, and the attitude is in itself eloquent, while it is a marvel of technique in drawing. Slight as the position allows our view of the face to be, it is that of a listener and speaker as well; but the irrepressible rabbi who touches His hand to compel His attention, does not disturb the serenity of the exposition being made by the raised fingers and thumb. Every ear, every eye, among the fourteen doctors is riveted—spellbound, as it were—on the wonderful Child.

Upon this scene comes, in the far background, the Virgin-Mother, with a dejected,

heart-broken mien. She has not yet discovered her Son, has not yet heard His voice; and Joseph is encouraging her to proceed with him, for she follows him. It is the only picture I know which gives the actual search and at the same time the young Christ in the midst of the doctors. The heads of the doctors are wonderfully individualized, every shade of attention being given; while the figures of the Virgin-Mother and Saint Joseph express the weary, heart-breaking search, and the youthful Christ is a dream of beauty and of supernatural intelligence.

But the Beuron, which we may also designate as the modern Benedictine School of Ideal Art, gives another rendering of this scene too precious to be omitted. The youthful beauty of the Child Jesus is entrancing. No conception yet embodied in any picture I know rivals it. The oval face has the length of a boy's of twelve; the simplicity of the pose is altogether as youthful. He is seated on the high base of a double column, connected by classic garlands to two other columns. It would seem to be a seat

for an instructor; but His feet do not touch the footstool, intended for some adult, to which lead four steps, all richly draped. To one side are five doctors, who have been occupied with the rolls beside them, while in in the hand of the Boy Jesus, resting on His knee, is an open volume.

But neither Boy nor doctor is now occupied with grave questions; for directly on the opposite side appear the Virgin-Mother and Saint Joseph. She comes close to the steps, raises her rapturous, yet still questioning, hands, looks into the eyes of her beloved One, and the sweet words, "Son, why hast Thou done so to us?" come from her lips. The Boy's eyes are bent upon, meet the eyes of His Mother, and the hand is raised slightly, in gentle expostulation, saying: "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" Saint Joseph stands at her side with his staff, one hand raised in that worshipful admiration which beseems him so well; and the sweet affection, divine majesty, of the Boy Jesus leaves nothing to desire, even when he says: "Did you not

know that I must be about My Father's business?"

We have given the traditional treatment of this dolor, and the action of the Divine Child, from Giotto to our own decade, these traditions being altogether on the side of fealty on the part of the Virgin-Mother herself; on the part of her Son, everything which endears youth to age; setting on the brow of the Boy Jesus, of twelve years, that aureole of meekness which beautified His cruciform nimbus as the Redeemer of men.

RAPHAEL

THE MEETING ON THE WAY TO CALVARY

IV.—The Meeting between Our Lord and His Mother on the Way to Calvary

How like a dream, in an atmosphere of inconceivable loveliness, must not have seemed to Mary the hidden life of Jesus at Nazareth! Of all the Nazarene youths, none was more retiring than "the Son," as He was accounted, "of Joseph the carpenter." Not one was more assiduous at his occupation; and in the early days of the Church the faithful were reminded of the ploughs and yokes made from the hard wood by this Youth who had confounded, by the wisdom of His questions, the perfection of His replies, the wise men of His nation; and until the age of thirty this marvel continued.

Saint Joseph died during these years, breathing out his soul most peacefully on the

bosom of Jesus, with Mary at his side; and this unity of the Holy Family once riven, we feel that it is a signal for the breaking up of the household itself. The ears of Jesus and of Mary were quick to hear the cry of the Baptist. It was the call to the public life of Jesus Himself, and was obeyed as implicitly as Saint Joseph had obeyed the voice and gesture of the angel charging him to flee into Egypt.

That Mary followed we can have no doubt; and thus the home at Nazareth was a deserted one. We can see her blue mantle flitting among the crowds that flocked to Saint John on the banks of the Jordan. She saw that Dove, symbolizing the same Holy Spirit which had flooded her soul with an awful joy at the moment of the Incarnation, descend upon the head of Jesus; she heard the voice, and she knew that the beginning of the end had come. The vocations of the several Apostles were so many revelations to her; and when they appeared with their Master at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, the miracle which she

evoked from her Son disclosed Him in all His beauty to the admiring guests. It was the opening of a celestial flower under the smile of Mary's virginal maternity.

Thenceforth the story of the "three years' ministry" absorbs the Evangelists. She appears once with His brethren while He is preaching and working wonders, and the word is sent to Him that His Mother and His brethren are without, desiring to speak with Him. But while she hears that voice declare, "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother, My sister, and mother," she knows that her presence has been a consolation to Him.

But the plots of Pharisees and Sadducees are deepening: closer and closer around Him are their nets woven; and closer and closer around Mary draws that circle of holy women who are to be her companions to the last: Mary, the wife of Cleophas, the brother of Saint Joseph, the mother of James and Jude, and a near relative of the Blessed Virgin; and Saint Mary Magdalene, the sister of Lazarus of Bethany.

During these last days she is always represented with these devoted women; above all, with Saint Mary Magdalene. They are with her when the tidings come to her, by the mouth of the Beloved Disciple, of all that passed in the Garden of Olives, the judgment hall of Pilate; but now she sees with her own eyes that the murderous sentence is to be carried out. She sees the procession of centurion and guards and soldiers taking its way from Pilate's house; in the midst she sees Jesus bearing His cross without one helping hand; sees Him sinking to the ground under its weight. With a cry of anguish, she darts forward, makes her way through the ranks of armed soldiers, kneels beside her Divine Son, stretches toward Him the hands that wrapped Him in His swaddling clothes, but which are not allowed to touch Him now in His humiliation. All the dolors of her thirty-three years—since she presented Him in the Temple, fled with Him to Egypt, sought Him through the streets of Jerusalem; all the grief at seeing Him rejected by His nation, persecuted, calumnia-

ted, at last condemned, and actually led to a most shameful and bitter death,—seize her heart like a death spasm. The eyes of the Son meet the eyes of the Mother; the same spasm that wrenches the heart of the Mother wrenches that of her Son; and her broken, tearless sobs are the only sounds that mark their meeting.

In that "Way of the Cross" in which the late beloved Father Sorin, of the Congregation of the Holy Cross, has given us his meditations while making the actual *Via Crucis* in Jerusalem, we read: "The pilgrim is told where Jesus and Mary met on the road to Calvary; the sacred spot which even now, from tradition, is called 'The Spasm,' and which has been kept ever since in the greatest veneration. Here, in overwhelming affliction, met the two tenderest hearts that ever lived. O Mother of Sorrows, to whom shall I liken thee? For thy pain is boundless as the sea."

Cimabue, at Assisi, gives the mounted soldiery, awful in helmets and armor and lifted spears, pressing through the gate of the

Holy City; and just outside we see the procession on foot, led by two mounted men-at-arms. In their rear are the two thieves who are to be crucified, urged on by blows; followed by Our Lord carrying His cross with a meekness that might disarm the malice of His executioners, if not of those who had sought His condemnation. Behind Our Lord are two other armed men, who are addressing a group of sorrowful women that have braved soldiers and horsemen to follow the Crucified; and here we recognize the Blessed Virgin, Saint Mary Magdalene, Mary of Cleophas, the Beloved Disciple Saint John; while scowling horsemen, as we have said, press upon them at the gate.

But most threatening of all is one of the horsemen leading the procession, who looks angrily back and points his naked sword at the sorrowing women, as if ordering them from the ranks. The Magdalene meets his eye and the glint of his sword, and seems to remonstrate; but the Mother, like her Son, bows meekly to the command, as do her

companions; Saint John holding his cheek in his hand, in his anguish.

In the Franciscan church of Santa Croce, Florence, Taddeo Gaddi gives this scene with a beauty of conception worthy of the artist who adorned the Spanish chapel in Santa Maria Novella. The towers of the Holy City are seen above the walls, from which pour crowds following in the wake of the cross, which rests on the shoulders of Our Lord, surrounded by armed men in their helmets and banners, with spears raised high. Close in the rear we see a group of women, and a soldier is raising his mace at them threateningly. But one darts forward, throws out both her hands to the full-length of her arms toward the holy Sufferer, with an expression on her face of such anguish, such agony, as only a gesture like this could express; while the meek Lord turns upon her that look of divine compassion which only a mother could claim, and that a virgin-mother. The dolor is here in all its fullness, in all its supernatural intensity. No

one who ever looked upon that picture could fail to compassionate Mary, even when the meek Son of God is seen bending under His cross as a malefactor; for this it is which pierces the soul of Mary, rending her heartstrings.

Once more our Fra Angelico takes up the story of Mary's Dolors. Can we not picture to ourselves the Dominican Brother who had never dreamed of taking Holy Orders; who took his place in the stalls instead of before the altar; who thought not of edifying his brethren, only of saving his own soul, and by the pious practice of his art to help them to save theirs; whose modesty shrank from preferment, and who loved, next to his prayer-stall in the choir, the solitude of his cell and the silence of his special calling,—can we not imagine this humble lay-brother shedding silent tears, as meditating, with his brethren, on the Passion of his beloved Master, the thought of Our Lady and of her part in that Passion comes over him like a wave of compassion, until he realizes that the sorrows of Jesus were

Mary's sorrows as well, and the anguish that pierced the Heart of Jesus pierced hers also?

To pass from the choir to his own cell, or to the cell of the Brother whose book of meditation he was painting on its walls, was only to pass from one place of prayer, from one place of meditation, to another; and when he addressed himself to delineating the scenes in the story of Jesus of Nazareth, he had only to bow his head with an invocation to the Holy Spirit, to bring everything before his mind with the vividness of the actual event. No wonder that these conceptions, so simple in their outlines, often so barren as to details, lift the imagination, rouse the sympathies, and open, we know not how, vistas of thought which attract us, lead us out of the beaten paths of worldly conceptions, worldly criticisms, to yield ourselves to the gentle spell of genius lighting its flame at the lamp of the sanctuary.

Again we see the lofty towers that strengthen the walls of Jerusalem; a few cypresses lift their heads beside them; a few

olive-trees are scattered over the hillside. The gate is open, and horsemen in helmets and armor come forward on their war steeds, but without haste or animosity. To the right we see a road winding among rocks, and an armed procession following its sharp curves; while between these is a group which tells us the bitter story. Under the very heads of the horsemen issuing from the gate is a group of women, gentle, with clasped hands, as if adoring while they walk. The first full figure that comes to view is that of the Magdalene. A fillet binds modestly the hair which once wiped the anointed feet of her Master. Her hands are clasped in pain; her eyes look steadfastly before her, as if they could not turn from the object of her adoration; and directly before her, a tall, gentle figure, the hands clasped even tighter than those of the Magdalene, the star shining on her mantled shoulder, is Mary. She bends forward with a longing gesture, as if she must touch the object of her soul's worshipful love; and the eyes meet His whose glance has been the sunshine of her life.

But as she leans forward a soldier puts out his hand toward her as if to say: "You must not advance one step!" That "must not" was all that need be said to break Mary's heart. The anguish on that tender, thin face—the unresisting anguish—is like His only who goes before her, His unshod feet cut by the stones in the way, the slender hands balancing the heavy cross on His own shoulder; but the head, with its cruciform nimbus, turning toward His Mother with an agony of compassion. No other compassion we have described has been like this compassion; no other has probed like this the depth of Mary's dolor.

We pass from the quiet cloister of Saint Mark's, from the silent presence of its lay-brother, called "the blessed one" even by his brethren of the monastery, to a studio in Rome—the studio of one beloved as few in this world have been beloved; and yet bereaved of father, mother—every relative but an uncle, by whose loving, appreciative care his genius has been sheltered from the age of eleven years. The world, its nobles,

its princes, its emperors, its pontiffs, have lavished upon him their highest honors, their unbounded admiration. The wonder is that no flattery has altered his gentle modesty, no worldly grandeur taken from him the vision of heavenly things. Some mysterious virtue surrounds him, men say; but angels know that he has kept his youthful piety.

In the midst of all the commissions of imperial and pontifical favor comes one from the monks of Monte Oliveto, Palermo, Sicily; the scene to be that in which Our Lord is met on His way to Calvary by His most sorrowful Mother. In a moment of tender exaltation, of pious emotion, the artist of the Vatican, the almost worshipped Raphael of Urbino, of entire Italy, and of civilized Europe, conceives the picture which is still called to-day *Lo Spasimo*, or "The Spasm." In this there is all the charm of a receding landscape, of a vernal sky, of trees putting forth their tender leafage; and the winding road, over which are scattered many and differing groups, leads to a hill on which stand two crosses, the ominous space between

them to be filled by Him who had come to redeem the world from the consequences of its sin by His own most bitter death.

The broad standard of Rome, with its S. P. Q. R., carried by an officer superbly mounted, helmeted and in full armor, floats between us and that hill of skulls. The centurion, a model of manly beauty, with uncovered head, but otherwise in complete armor, mounted on his charger, surrounded by his staff with their long lances, issues from a strong gateway; but standard-bearer and centurion are alike occupied with the scene that fills the foreground. The victim of His nation's hatred, of Pilate's timorous selfishness, has fallen under the heavy cross laid on His shoulders; and the centurion, with a look of deep anxiety on his face, motions to an attendant to relieve the condemned One of its cruel weight, which taxes even the trained muscles of the executioner to raise. There is no rudeness, no urging; all are simply performing the conditions of the sentence—an ordinary sentence, and yet it would seem upon some extraordinary man.

Under the shadow, the shelter for the moment, of His own cross, on which He still keeps one hand, the other grasping a stone of the road as He falls on His knees, is the King of Glory, His cruciform nimbus mingling with His crown of thorns; His divine beauty unobscured by the blood that mats the hair falling on His shoulders, crimsoning his robe; and, looking upward, half prostrate as He is, to meet the eyes—of whom?

Directly in front of the centurion and his war charger, on her knees, is Mary, as if when her Son fell she had fallen also; the yearning, agonized face looking into His; and the arms—how can we put into words what those long arms and hands, extended to their utmost, tell of that Mother's agony! Mary Magdalene, Mary of Cleophas, and still another, with Saint John, are sustaining her; but she heeds them not. For herself, even, she has no thought. One only fills her soul, seizes her heart like a spasm—which is, to see the Incarnate One trodden upon as "a worm and no man" by the creatures He has created, whom He sustains in life while

hastening to His own death. Seas may be convulsed, rocks may be rent; but, to Jesus, Son of God and Son of Mary, none of this compares with the spasm that clutches at His Mother's heart as He turns on her His divinely compassionate eyes.

Yet devotion, genius, the skill which the world admires, craves, have set this dolor before the eyes of one century after another, for one purpose only, whether by the hand of Cimabue, Taddeo Gaddi, Fra Angelico or Raphael—to win us to its contemplation.

V.—The Crucifixion

The *Via Crucis*, that Way of the Cross, which was a way of unutterable sorrows, has been made. Blood is tracked along the streets of Jerusalem from Pilate's hall to the city gate through which that procession passed; is tracked along the winding, rocky way which it took from the gate. Simon of Cyrene has borne—first unwillingly, then with a mysterious joy, which flooded his soul and was succeeded by the gift of faith—that same cross on which Jesus is to redeem the world. Veronica, too, has won, by her ardent devotion, her uncalculating charity, that image on her mantle, which is still shown on Good-Friday from a balcony in Saint Peter's Basilica. Both have been immortalized by their compassionate service to the Man of Sorrows.

And now we approach, actually stand on

DUCCIO

THE CRUCIFIXION

the summit of that hill of Calvary, bearing the ghastly name of Golgotha, or place of skulls; and here, in full sight of the Holy City, the City of David, they crucify Him of whom the prophets spake and the psalmist sang; for whom the world had waited and longed for four thousand years;—crucify Him between two thieves, adding ignominy to ignominy; thus fulfilling the prediction of Isaiah: "He was reputed with the wicked; and He hath borne the sins of many, and hath prayed for the transgressors."

But in return for these ignominies, these tortures, there comes from the inexhaustible patience of the Divine Heart this one ejaculation: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

It was high noon, and the March sun shone unclouded from the sky, when that space which was seen between two crosses on the summit of Calvary when Mary met her Son in the way, was filled, bearing on its beam the Body of the God-Man, on its arms the pierced hands of the Victim of sin; but no sooner was He thus lifted up than a

darkness more appalling than any blackness preceding a tornado covered not only Mount Calvary, Judea, but the entire earth. For three hours it hung like a pall over the world, so that Dionysius the Areopagite exclaimed in his fair city of Athens: "Either the God of nature is suffering or the framework of the world is breaking up!" And for three hours that Body of the Incarnate Word hung white amid the surrounding darkness, was seen distinctly from the Holy City; and for three hours Mary, maiden and mother, stood by the cross of her crucified Son. She did not lean against that cross, she did not lean upon the faithful women who had accompanied her; simply stood under His pierced right hand.

The first hour had been passed when the eyes, clotted and bloodshot, sought those of Mary lifted to His own; and the lips parted with these words: "Mother, behold thy son!" Then the eyes turned to the Beloved Disciple standing under His left hand as He said: "Behold thy Mother!" "O what change to thee!" exclaims Saint Bernard;

"Thou art given John for Jesus; the servant for his Lord; the disciple for his Master; the son of Zebedee for the Son of God; a mere man for very God!" A dolor in itself.

Again that voice is heard in its low minor key: "I thirst!" Jesus thirsts! He who made the world; who set the springs of water in the deep rocks, protects them by shadows in the dense forests where the shy stag can quench its thirst at noonday; sends down the dew at evening to revive the fainting flowers over the whole earth,—calls for one drop of all that He has created and blessed both for man and beasts and fowl of the air; and Mary cannot give Him the drop for which He sighs so piteously. Another dolor within our dolor.

Again a voice, but not the voice of Jesus, breaks on Mary's ear—the voice of the Good Thief, the only alleviation which was vouchsafed during three hours of agony on the cross: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." And the tender voice she loves so well is heard: "This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise."

But now it is a cry—a cry that pierces the heart of Mary, close beside Him in the awful darkness: "My God, My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Not only pierces her heart, but opens before her undreamed-of abysses of anguish in the soul of Jesus! Another dolor within our dolor.

To this agonizing appeal succeeds a cry which is an utter offering up of his dying humanity—an offering, too, in behalf of humanity all over the world dying at that moment, of all who are to die to the last moment of time, to be echoed by the dying through all ages—"Father into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

Another cry, the last cry, so strong that it startles the centurion, who exclaims: "Verily this Man was the Son of God!" For that cry, *Consummatum est!*—"It is consummated!"—tells Mary that the soul of her Jesus has left the earth which He had blessed with His incarnate presence for thirty-three years; has left the world He came to redeem; and who can tell the absolute vacuum left in the heart of Mary! She sees the beautiful

head—gory indeed, ghastly indeed, but, oh, how beautiful still!—fall on His breast; and she knows that her Jesus is dead. While Jesus lives Mary stands. Can we wonder if she sinks on the arms of her friends as gently as the head of Jesus had sunk on His breast?

At this moment the veil of the Temple, the veil that hid the Holy of Holies, is rent in twain from the top to the bottom; the earth quakes beneath her; the very rocks are rent; the graves of Jerusalem are opened; but none of these horrors can stir the heart of Mary, for they stir not the Heart of Jesus.

While no hand is yet known to have delineated this divine tragedy on any wall of an early catacomb, or upon any wall of chapel or basilica before that which in this last half of our present century has been laid open to view in the subterranean Church of Saint Clement, Rome, the perfection of this Crucifixion, as a type, is proof that it was treated in the liturgical books from a very early period; and this Crucifixion itself must have been executed long before the year 800,

when the Church of Saint Clement was so severely injured by an earthquake as to necessitate the building of another basilica on its still sound walls; and from that time until 1858 was hermetically sealed to the eyes of men. It is painted on a wide pilaster forming a right angle with the end of the nave. Our Lord is represented attached to the cross by four nails, the arms horizontal, the head above the cross-beam; so that He seems literally to hang there of His own free will.

On the right side stands His Blessed yet sorrowing Mother, both hands raised to Him as if in sympathy; on the left hand Saint John, his right hand raised also in the same spirit, but in his left hand is the scroll of an Evangelist. Simple as the conception is, it embodies the Gospel story, and in no Crucifixion have the relative places of the Blessed Virgin and of Saint John been deviated from. Although the old Saint Clement was in darkness, the tradition which it followed in this instance was the inheritance of Christendom; and from that time to this has been adhered

to; and from that time no subject has been so near to the heart of Christendom, or so universally chosen by her artists.

From the first, the Blessed Virgin and Saint John were introduced, we think, invariably; and later, in the Church of Saint Francis at Assisi, in the series begun by Cimabue and finished by Giotto, the Crucifixion is given with all its attendant circumstances. In this picture Longinus has already pierced the side of Our Lord; and, as if this act had opened the eyes of his mind, he has left his steed and is kneeling on the ground with his hands lifted in adoration. Saint Mary Magdalene is embracing the cross on one side, Saint Francis on the other; and in the centre of a group of pitying women is Our Lady, who has sunk to the ground in a swoon. Troops of horsemen are leaving Mount Calvary, and the space on the right is occupied by the followers of the crucified One.

Duccio's Crucifixion dwells upon the sorrow of Our Lady in a still more marked manner. The Lord of Glory is dead; the spear has pierced His side; and directly in

the foreground is the beautiful group of Our Lady tenderly supported by the holy women who are her companions, while Saint John takes her hands on his own. She does not actually swoon, but the revulsion of mortal weakness has come after those three hours of standing immovably;—one of Duccio's loveliest groups, and in no way contradicting the account by Saint John; since it represents, we may say, the scene a few moments after the death of Our Lord, and is full of the tenderest human sentiment.

Simoni Memmi, in the series painted by him in the Spanish chapel of Santa Maria Novella, gives a magnificent epitome of the event in the arch above and around the altar; so arranged as to give the procession to Mount Calvary, the scene immediately following the Crucifixion—soldiers, guardsmen, mounted officers, and those who derided Our Lord, saying: "Vah! vah!" All are there, with the crucified thieves, the angels in the air lamenting. But on the right side are the holy women around Our Lady; and Saint Mary Magdalene is entreating a soldier, who

turns toward her, to allow them to go near to the cross. In this, Our Lady stands, with clasped hands but perfectly quiet, looking at her suffering Son, while the Magdalene entreats for her.

On the bronze panels of the pulpit in Saint Lorenzo, in Florence, Donatello has given the whole story of the Passion and death of Our Lord with a vividness which seems to throw all other representations into shadow, as we follow out the awful story. In this Crucifixion, how cuirassed men, soldiers with their spears, horsemen who draw their helmets over their eyes to shut out the horrors of a scene more awful than the eye of man had ever before witnessed, throng upon one another! How the three crosses and the three victims, how angels and demons, how the spears and the banners fill the air! And we actually see the blackness, the more than midnight darkness of that eclipse; see and feel it as actual. But in the midst of all this how the head of Jesus bends toward the Mother, standing, with bowed head and clasped hands, beside Him! Our dolor is

there in all its intensity: fills the eye, fills the heart, as it fills the very centre of our foreground.

With the Crucifixion by Fra Angelico, in Saint Mark's at Florence, we enter upon another phase of its representation. We have the reality of the three crosses, the Lord of Glory crucified between two thieves; but instead of helmeted warriors, guardsmen, executioners, we have the saints of all times, especially of those religious orders that favor meditation; for it is the reality, as it comes before the faithful by way of meditation, that Fra Angelico delineates in his Crucifixion; drawing forth that bundle of myrrh of which Saint Bernard speaks as lying always on his breast "to make up for the sheaf of merits" which he knew he had not. "To think of these troubles and griefs," he says, "is real wisdom. In them I have determined to find perfect righteousness, full knowledge, plentiful salvation, and abundant merit. It is the thought of these troubles and woes of His that cheereth me when I am afflicted, and maketh me grave when it is well with

me. Do ye also gather you a bundle of this beloved myrrh."

Here we have the motive of Angelico's picture. This is why we see Saint John Baptist, still as the precursor, beside the cross; why we see Saint Lawrence with his gridiron, Saint Benedict with his book of rules, Saint Dominic and Saint Francis with their disciples. But meditation is sure to keep in mind Our Blessed Lady and her Dolors; and the "Stabat Mater" echoes in every line of this picture; sets to its plaintive measure every thought of the mind, every compassionate impulse of the heart of him who conceived and executed it. She is seen here sustained by Mary of Salome, and by Saint John as her son; while before her, on her knees, the Magdalene embraces her as the Mother of Sorrows; in the abandonment of her own grief, compassionating Our Lady.

Luca della Robbia, a contemporary of Fra Angelico, whose tender piety has interpreted in so many of his works the choicest sentiments of the Christian soul, has companioned

the Angelical in the ways of meditation. In his Crucifixion, how close to that cross stands the Mother, looking down in her own anguish upon St. Francis, as if to console him for the wounds borne for the love of Jesus; while "the most beautiful Saint John in the world" stands and adores the Master; adoring angels filling the air, bringing heaven and its transports to the King of Glory in His humiliation!

It was in this same spirit of meditation that Perugino composed his "Great Crucifixion," as it is called, for the chapel of Saint Mary Magdalene of Pazzi in Florence. Instead of a crowded scene, the very air vibrating with the ghastly horrors of a midnight at noonday, three wide arches stand between us and a vast landscape—hills, valleys, inland seas, towns. Trees, just foliating as if in spring, crown the near hills, and fleecy clouds float through the broad spaces of sky. Within the central arch stands the cross which bears the crucified One, the beautiful head, with its circlet of delicate thorns and the cruciform nimbus, slightly bowed as if in death; the

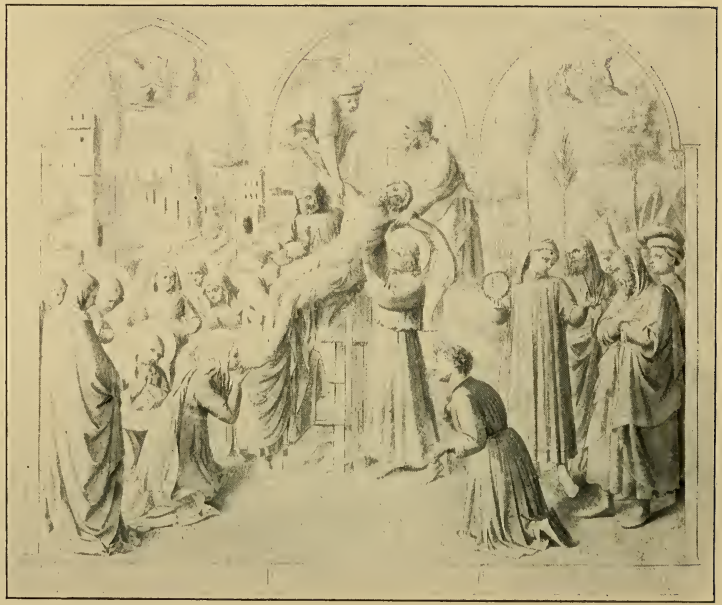
arms are nearly horizontal; the whole figure self-sustained and of the perfection of beauty in its proportions, breathing repose, as it were, in every line. At the foot of the cross kneels Saint Mary Magdalene,—one of Perugino's Magdalenes, unlike all others in the tenderness of its absorbed devotion; the eyes raised to her Lord, but the lids heavy with weeping; the hands gently joined at the finger tips. It is Mary of Bethany, who had chosen the better part.

Within the left-hand arch stands Saint John, his eyes fixed upon the face of his Divine Master; the arms and hands dropped at his side, as if saying: "Was ever sorrow like this sorrow? Was ever love like this love?" Nothing more compassionate, nothing more gentle, nothing more affectionate, was ever imagined as a Saint John. Very near to him kneels Saint Benedict, his face, with its deep look of abiding compassion for his Lord, raised to Him hanging on His cross.

Within the right-hand arch stands Our Lady, looking out upon the world which was given to her by Our Lord when He gave her

Saint John as her son. A desolation not to be put into words pervades the whole figure. The hands, held downward, do not clasp, but interweave in the distress of this desolation; there is a weariness in the eyes like those of patient watchers by beds of sickness and of death; and the sad sweetness of the mouth is that of one who suffers without complaint. Near her kneels Saint Bernard, his tender words of sympathy giving him this place beside Our Lady.

But Steinle, of our own day, brings us back to the actual keynote of our theme. We see the domes of Jerusalem; before the cross stands Mary; Jesus is not yet there, only the sword promised by Simeon. The head is bowed; the hands and intertwining fingers raised to her agonized breast, not to avert but to accept this dolor of the Crucifixion.



FRA ANGELICO

THE DEPOSITION

VI.—The Deposition

Just at the first shout in the streets of Jerusalem from the fierce rabble that apprehended Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, at the first gathering in the hall of Pilate, at the appearing of Our Lord, crowned with thorns, the reed-sceptre in His hand, on the balcony overlooking the riotous crowd, crying, "Crucify Him! crucify Him!" at the departure of the procession from the door of Pilate's house; all along the *Via Crucis* to the very summit of Calvary; during the awful darkness of the three hours of agony on the cross, till the death-cry, *Consummatum est!* rent the veil of the Temple, cleft the rocks, opened the graves around Jerusalem,—two figures moved as silently as shadows through all these scenes, not as participants, but as men whose intelligent eyes read and noted

every incident, yet so abstractedly as to escape observation.

These were Joseph of Arimathea, a good and just man, a noble counsellor of the Sanhedrim, privy to all its doings, but without consenting to them; and Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, like Joseph of Arimathea a member of the Sanhedrim, who had come, very early in the three years' ministry, to Jesus by night. Both at heart have been, from the first, disciples of Jesus, but secretly, out of regard to their wordly position. Now, however, as the darkness rolls away from Calvary, these noble souls rise from their abject bondage to Sanhedrim and Synagogue; and when the soldiers come to take down the three bodies from their crosses, Joseph of Arimathea finds the centurion, whose spear had attested the death of Jesus, and whose faith had been born of the death-cry, ready to accede to any request of the noble counsellor, who forthwith presents himself boldly before Pilate and begs the body of Jesus.

Together Joseph and Nicodemus buy fine

linen and spices, returning to Calvary, where the centurion and the holy women and Saint John keep watch over the sacred humanity of Jesus of Nazareth. How carefully and how tenderly they place the ladders at the back of the cross! How gently they ascend, these noble senators, the coarse rounds. Not only how gently, but how reverently! Not only how reverently, but how worshipfully! And now they actually touch the lifeless body of Jesus—touch it with a feeling like nothing in the world so much as that with which the priest touches the body of Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar. With an adoring pitifulness they lift the crown of thorns from the bowed head, drawing out the sharp points slowly from the flesh, from the hair matted with blood—never had thorns seemed so cruel,—and lay it into the uplifted hands of Saint John.

Adoringly—they know not how, so firmly are they fixed in the hard wood of the cross, so glued do they seem to the fleshly wounds of the pierced hands,—they draw forth those large, rudely-fashioned, blunt nails, that have

bent under the stroke of the hammer, leaving wide open those two wounds, like rings set with jacinths; and thus, half released, the body, gently sustained by Joseph of Arimathea, leans forward till Mary's arms are raised to receive it, while Nicodemus descends and draws out the one dreadful nail on which both sacred feet have borne down through three hours of mortal agony; the wide-open wounds, livid, yet tinged with blood, bringing to mind that word of the psalmist, "They pierced my hands and my feet," when the arms slide, rather than fall, upon Mary's shoulders, and the lifeless lips touch hers, clinging to them with the sweetness of a mother's anguish.

One moment more, and Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus and Saint John bear the body of the Lord in their arms to where Mary is being led by the Magdalene and Mary of Cleophas, to a rock pushing up through the turf, and lay on her knees the still, limp form of her lifeless Son—the one indulgence granted to her motherhood; the same Son whose infant limbs she had wrapped

in their swaddling clothes in the Stable of Bethlehem; whose tender cry she had stilled with a few drops of milk from her virginal breast! There is no cry now: the silence is that of death; and the pierced hands, the pierced feet, the pierced side, the long hair clotted with blood, the still livid marks of the scourges, tell the awful story as no word of man or of angel could tell it to Mary.

The actual Deposition, or the taking down of the Crucified One from the cross, was chosen early by the Greek artists; and the deepest veneration was adhered to in the conducting of this descent of the sacred body. The Greek traditions had been transmitted to Duccio of Siena, and to his representation we turn as to the most perfect exponent of the sentiments of that age. In this we see Joseph of Arimathea descending the ladder, one arm thrown over the arm of the cross in order to steady himself, but the right supporting the body of the Lord under both arms. Saint John has one arm around the body, the other around the knees, and Nicodemus is drawing the one nail from the crossed feet.

Thus, as the body inclines forward, one arm and hand fall on the shoulder of Mary, who takes His face between her hands and kisses it most fondly; the other hand and arm have been taken by the Magdalene in her mantle, and pressed to her cheek with an exceeding mournfulness of pity. Four other pitying women surround this group, in which the dolor of the Blessed Virgin may be considered as the chief motive, and this motive expressed with a tenderness, a loveliness, which leaves it, as a conception, unequalled in art. Again and again had this type been hinted at, but never carried out in its perfection until the Sienese painter, inheriting, as he had, the sensibility which belongs to his race, conceived it, in a moment of tearful transport, for one of the compartments of the great altarpiece in the cathedral of his own city.

In the sacristy of the Church of "The Trinity," Florence, Fra Angelico painted a Deposition, which is now in the Belle Arti of that city, so elaborate in its arrangement, so carefully executed, that it has been re-

garded always as one of his greatest works. The city of Jerusalem and its hills make the background, sorrowing angels filling in the points of the side arches, the middle taken up altogether with the cross and the ladders and the figures of the noble senators, who are supporting the body under the arms; the beautiful head rests on its own shoulder,—the whole figure so sustained by Saint John on one side, on the other by two disciples, as to give the perfection of grace and beauty in death: no distortion by reason of the agony that is past; no effort on the part of those who have entirely released the precious body from its bed of suffering; Saint Mary Magdalene is holding the pierced feet adoringly on her hands, as she touches them with her lips.

At the left hand, near Saint John, is a group of figures—holy men, who have followed the Lord, and are now with Him at His burial; and one, carrying in one hand the three nails, in the other the crown of thorns, holds them pityingly before them; while a youth, with a shining halo, but not an aureole, kneels

in a transport of adoration, gazing at the dead Christ descending from His cross on the hands of those who love Him. On the right hand, the holy women, a group of seven, sorrowingly surround the Blessed Virgin, who is on her knees, waiting, with hands joined, to receive her Son into her arms; while, standing over her, is Mary of Cleophas, looking down upon her, with clasped hands and streaming tears, as if pitying the heart-break of this Mother of Sorrows.

The holy tranquillity of an adoring compassion is unbroken by one movement of haste or of anxiety, and the line of blood and water that trickles from the wounded side, and a few drops on the forehead where the crown of thorns rested, only recall that copious blood-shedding by which the world had been redeemed; while on the countenance rests a serene brightness, as if the Divine Sufferer had entered into His rest.

It is told of Murillo that, as a mere child, he would linger for hours before the great picture by Campana in the sacristy of the Cathedral of Seville, a Descent from the

Cross,—"waiting," as he said, "until those holy men should take down the Blessed Lord." The most beautiful fruit of this early predilection is a mystical Deposition—the dead Christ lying on the lap of the Eternal Father, the arms resting horizontally to the elbows across the knees, the head held in one hand, the other lifted over the forehead of the Eternal Son, as if in benediction; still above planes the Dove of the Eternal Holy Spirit; the winding-sheet on which repose the lifeless limbs, upheld by angels, dense clouds closing around it; while above is a burst of glory, as if from the Beatific Vision.

The scene following immediately upon the actual Deposition, when Our Lord rests from the grievous travail of Redemption on the knees of His Blessed Mother, called the "Pietà," or the Compassion, has found a place in sculpture and in painting through all the most beautiful periods of Christian art, calling forth the most delicate sentiments of sympathy from the soul of the artist, and demanded by the people of every nation which

has heard the story of Redeeming Love and of Mary's woes. The Byzantine School, from first to last, made it one of the subjects of predilection; and when Cimabue painted in the upper Church of Saint Francis at Assisi, Giotto in the Arena Chapel at Padua, it was not forgotten. Ambrogio Lorenzetti's "Pietà" is in the Academy at Siena; Donatello's, on one of the bronze panels of the pulpit in San Lorenzo, Florence; Botticelli's, in the Munich Gallery; Mantegna's can be studied in the Brera Gallery; Bellini's, in Florence. Fra Angelico painted this scene several times; but while the title is allowed to cover many scenes in the same act, we limit our own presentation of it to the literal lying of the dead Christ on the lap of His Mother.

It is this which Michael Angelo sculptured with all the fervor of youthful piety, as the spring flower of his mighty genius, and which stands to-day in the first chapel to the right hand as we push back the ponderous leathern curtain that hangs before the entrance to Saint Peter's Basilica, Rome. The right

hand of the Virgin-Mother supports the slender body of her Son under its right shoulder, the hand dropping helplessly in death; the head is pillowed once more on her arm, the limbs upon her knees, as she bends over Him with all a mother's compassion; and her left hand is put forth slightly, with a gesture of irrepressible anguish, as if saying: "Was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow?"

In the Belle Arti, Florence, is a "Pietà," strictly so-called, by Perugino; not the actual scene on Mount Calvary, but by way of meditation. The body of the dead Christ rests on His Mother's knees; the head is borne on the shoulders of a kneeling youth, who looks out from the picture as if asking our pity; but above him is seen a Saint John, who seems to be still gazing on his Lord upon the cross. The feet rest upon the knees of Saint Mary Magdalene, who, with clasped hands, deeply meditative countenance, contemplates those wounded feet, which she anointed for their burial. At her side stands Joseph of Arimathea, the clasped hands held downward, the face full of the deepest com-

passion, looking upon Our Lady, as she, too, looks with unspeakable compassion upon the face of her Divine Son—that face so benign in death, yet so solemn in its adorable sweetness. The whole group is sublimely conceived; the sorrow a sublime sorrow, and the grandeur is of that sort which takes in the beginning and the end: the eternity of Redemption in the mind of God, as well as the eternity of its duration for those who embrace it.

To the right, as one enters the Chapel of San Brizio, in the Cathedral of Orvieto (where we see on the walls the unrivalled groups of the Last Judgment, in all their terrible significance, by Luca Signorelli, and on the ceiling those groups of the blessed after their last judgment by Fra Angelico), in the midway arch stands high on a pedestal, so as to break in between Signorelli's groups, a "Pietà" in marble by Ippolito Scalza,—a veritable Dead Christ on the lap of His Mother. Her hand lies under His right arm, hanging downward; His head rests upon His own shoulder; His left arm is slightly raised

by Saint Mary Magdalene, so that her cheek presses upon the pierced hand; while her own left hand is laid gently under His pierced left foot. Joseph of Arimathea stands to the right of the Blessed Virgin, one hand on the ladder, the other holding to his breast the pincers with which he detached the Lord Christ from His cross; and he looks down into the dead face, pillowed on its own shoulder, with a manly tenderness of sympathy which is also worship.

The grandeur of the Mother of Sorrows is emphasized by the raised hand, as if she were uttering one of the Lamentations of Jeremiah over the lifeless Saviour of her people, as well as her own Son. The terminal forms of the Christ have not the delicacy of those in Michael Angelo's "Pietà:" the whole form is heavier; but the head is very beautiful, the relaxed expression of the whole figure most pathetic, and the sublimity of Mary in anguish is worthy of all the prophecies which she and her Divine Son have fulfilled.

The Campo Santo, not of Pisa, but of Siena, gives us a "Pietà" which proves that

neither piety nor inspiration is to fail with the ages. This is by Giovanni Dupré, born at Siena, March 1, 1817. Let us quote his own words: "When I was engaged by the Marquis Ruspoli to make the 'Pietà' for the Campo Santo of the Misericordia in Siena, I said: 'The Son of God crucified and dead, the Mother mourning for Him,—these are the two grand thoughts of my subject; two, but virtually forming only one.' This idea called up in my mind the image of the group, and I made my small model in clay." To this followed studies from a model; but nothing satisfied. "One day, in summer," he says, "I fell asleep; and lo! I seemed to see what I had long sought in vain, my 'Pietà:' Jesus stretched on the ground, sustained upon the knee of the Madonna, His right arm resting upon her, the left hanging down, His head gently inclined upon His breast; while the Madonna was bending over him with that look of unutterable woe. I woke up, ran to my studio and instantly made the new model. I tremble to think how this design, so simple, after I had

in vain tried to find it by art and by long study, came to me almost of itself." And indeed it is easy to believe that the artist was really inspired!

Our century closes with a "Pietà" from the School of Beuron, so tender, so altogether heavenly in its sorrow, so exquisite in its technique, that our own words may well close with it as gently as on on the strings of a harpist would die the last strains of the "Stabat Mater."

NOTE.—My first acquaintance with the School of Beuron was made through this picture, during my visit, in 1876, to Monte Cassino. Dom Bonifacio Krug, O. S. B., then Prior, now Archabbot, of Monte Cassino, had a small print of it in his possession, which he showed to me, with great veneration, as exemplifying the æsthetic and technical motives of this ideal school of art, founded by Benedictines during the last half of this present century. Under his priorship, the ancient monastery was glorified anew at the hands of the Beuron artists.

E. A. S.

VII.—The Entombment

The sun is near to its setting, and to-morrow is the Sabbath; and Mary, with her life-long habit of obedience to the law, resigns her Son, as she resigns herself, to the preparation which Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus have already made for His honorable burial. The fine linen is spread upon the turf of a quiet spot, which has escaped the trampling of armed men, of brutal soldiery, not far from the cross itself, and upon this they lay the body of our crucified Redeemer.

For the first time it lies before their eyes at its full length; for the first time not only the five open wounds, the livid marks of the whips, of the cords which bound Him to the pillar, are visible at one glance, but the wasting from the bloody sweat, the scourging, the crucifixion, the absolute fast from the hour of the Last Supper,—all like a rep-

PERUGINO

THE ENTOMBMENT

etition of the scenes in Gethsemane, in Pilate's hall, along the *Via Crucis*, the nailing to the cross, the three hours' dying, and this one instant opens anew the floodgates of Mary's sorrow, of all those who surround her, of all who are taking part in this last act of love for the dead. "They shall look upon Him whom they have pierced; they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for the death of the first-born," in this moment is fulfilled; and He who had wept at the tomb of Lazarus suffers these dear ones to pour out their anguish like rivers of water. He who groaned at the tomb before He said, "Lazarus, come forth!" allows their sobs and their cries to testify to their grief for Him. It is the outburst of a grief allowed by the God-Man Himself to the creatures He has created. There has never been a death-bed over which some mourner has not thrown himself in an agony of tears; and it must not be denied to the tenderest of all mothers, to the heart, broken, as no other heart has been, or can be, or to her companions.

As the crowds had dispersed from Mount

Calvary; still later, as the centurion, who had attended only to the taking down of the bodies of the two thieves and their burial, leaving the entombment of Jesus of Nazareth to His two noble friends of the Sanhedrim, left the scene of death with his staff,—one by one the disciples, and even Apostles, who had fled out of fear of being arrested as the followers of the Nazarene, return to the Mount, clustering around the scene of death. Swiftly Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus do their work; for the stars must not shine over Jerusalem, ushering in the Sabbath, until they have laid the Victim of that cruel day in His tomb. With skilled hands they spread the myrrh and precious spices over the body, here and there closing some bleeding gash, wrapping tightly the linen lengths around the body, the limbs; swathing them as the manner of the Jews was to bury. And as the deep blood stains come through the linen folds, they repeat to themselves Isaiah's exclamation: "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra, this Beautiful One in His robe? . . . Why is Thy ap-

parel red, and Thy garments like theirs that tread in the wine-press?" Adding in the sorrow of their souls: "Truly He has trodden the wine-press alone, and of all who have followed Him there has been none to help."

The last fold has been given: Jesus is ready for His tomb. But "where will they lay Him?" some ask of one another. Even Mary says in her bruised heart: "Where will they lay my precious One?" But Joseph of Arimathea knows of the garden close by the place of skulls where the divine tragedy has been enacted; for in that garden he has had hewn out for himself a new sepulchre, in which no one has ever lain. Toward this sepulchre, then, the little procession takes its way; Joseph of Arimathea, as its leader, with Nicodemus and Saint John; and those disciples, who have returned to see what would be done with Jesus, are only too favored, they believe, to be allowed to take on their arms, and even shoulders, the lifeless form of the Master they love even in the midst of their cowardice. The long twilight of the

approaching Paschal time favors the hasty arrangements, and before the first star has glinted in the blue sky, Jesus has been laid in the narrow bed of stone which Joseph of Arimathea had hewn out for himself in the spacious tomb; then, laying over it a slab, and rolling a heavy stone to the door of the sepulchre, they leave the Lord of Life to His place among the dead.

The baldness of the written narrative was supplied, from the first, by the oral narrative; the wealth of details, not only, as must have been, from the Blessed Virgin herself, Saint Mary Magdalene, and Mary of Salome, but from the retentive memory of the Beloved Disciple, whose Gospel must have seemed to him, and to those few of his contemporaries who read it—for it was the last of the Four Gospels that was written,—meagre beyond all things, when Saint John had so much to say, had they not come into the beautiful inheritance of the oral tradition, which quickened the meagre word and filled all the empty spaces. These traditions have never died out of the memory of the faithful, and

Art took early possession of them as her birthright.

Cimabue learned from his Greek masters all the Byzantine traditions, and he gives us a veritable "Pietà;" but leaves to Giotto the enshrouding of the body of Jesus, or the laying Him in His winding-sheet. In Cimabue's "Pietà," the lordly citizen of Florence, whose Madonna in Santa Maria Novella is a daughter of the royal House of David, loses himself utterly in the expressions of grief which he has given to the Blessed Virgin herself and her holy companions; and Giotto, at Padua, where we see the dead Christ laid on His winding-sheet, makes no scruple of giving vent to the most pathetic and, in some of the personages, the wildest expressions of grief. But leaving those artists who, like Mantegna, expressed the natural, rather than the supernatural, sorrow of this moment, we come to Perugino, whose Entombment, as it is called, portrays the very scene we have in mind with a pathos, and altogether a perfection of sentiment which leaves us nothing to desire.

The dead Christ has just been laid on His winding-sheet in a half-reclining position. Saint Joseph of Arimathea, on his knees, supporting the body under the arms with the winding-sheet; Saint Mary Magdalene His head; Nicodemus, on his knee, holding up the winding-sheet under the feet, while the Blessed Virgin holds His left arm on both her hands, looking into His face as if she felt the divine eyes of her Son would open upon her under her sorrowful gaze, although "lying nerveless among the dead." It is Saint Bernard who thus apostrophizes Mary on the Feast of her Dolors, on the Friday of Passion Week: "Did she not know that He was to die? Yea, without doubt. Did she not hope that He was to rise again? Yea, she most faithfully hoped it. And did she still mourn because He was crucified? Yea, bitterly. But who art thou, my brother, or whence hast thou such wisdom, to marvel less that the Son of Mary suffered than that Mary suffered with Him? He could die in the body, and could not she die with Him in her heart?" And yet, in the First Respon-

sory of this pathetic office, which is one of the poetic gems of the Roman Breviary, we read: "Maiden and Mother, thou didst look on Him with eyes full of tenderness, and there thou sawest not only that thy Son was smitten, but that the world was saved." All this is in Perugino's Entombment.

Of the beauty of this conception there has been no end of praise. Eastlake, in his History of Our Lord, says: "Perugino's exquisite picture in the Pitti, a work in which there are more beautiful heads than perhaps any other in the world." Of the Saint Mary Magdalene, it was once said to me by a friend whose faith had never compassed the Godhead of the Son of Man: "It is the most pitying face I ever saw." Saint John stands in his grief close to Joseph of Arimathea; Mary of Cleophas raises both her hands in the wonder of her soul over this unheard-of anguish; and still others come into the group without breaking in upon the exaltation of its pathos. A landscape stretches far off, with the towers of Jerusalem between the rocky hills which enclose this scene of

scenes. This picture was painted for the nuns of Saint Clara in Florence. Vasari tells us that "Francesco del Pugliese offered the nuns three times as much as they had paid Perugino for the picture, and promised to cause another exactly like it to be executed for them by the same hand; but they would not consent, because Perugino had told them he did not think he could equal the one they possessed."

Fra Bartolommeo, of San Marco, Florence, gives to our Dolor one of his most exqusite conceptions, embodied in the perfection of that technique, of which he was a master. Only the upright "tree of the cross" is visible. At its foot has been laid Him who, "while we were yet sinners, died," "the just for the unjust." Saint John, kneeling, looking out from the picture as if asking the sympathy of an entire world for its Redeemer, sustains the sacred body, his hand placed, reverently, on a fold of the fine linen, brought by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, beneath the arms; the left one hanging limp, its pierced hand resting on the

winding-sheet, spread on the ground, while from the wounded side trickle the last roseate drops of the Precious Blood. Saint Mary Magdalene, in a transport of grief, kneels on the ground, embraces, with both her arms twined around them, those divine limbs with their pierced feet, just detached from the cross, laying her cheek to them with unutterable devotion. But Mary, mother and martyr, kneeling, draws the lifeless head to her breast, breathes over it as a mother breathes over her cherished, her first-born, her only son; breathes words we feel, of loving compassion for all He has suffered, one arm, with its pierced hand, lying on her own motherly, pitying palm; all that is most tender, most gentle in sorrow in her face, in every line of her bending figure, as if saying: "Thou wert very sweet to me, my Son Jesus!"

The literal bearing of Our Lord to His tomb, like the Deposition, has excited the ambition of the most skillful pencils, of the most subtle colorists, the most learned anatomists; but our dolor is not in every one of these, and we turn to those which have been

painted under the inspiration of Our Lady's part in that sad procession.

The one which comes first to mind is Titian's. With all his Venetian sense of the glory of color, the charm of the picturesque, Titian had, deep in his soul, the sound Venetian faith. As a child, he painted Madonnas, tinting Our Lady's mantle with the juice of the pretty blue flower which still grows as commonly as a weed on all the meadows around lovely Cadore, where Titian was born, and so brittle that it stains the garment of the careless pedestrian. The love of our Blessed Lady never left his heart, and when he conceived his Entombment she was one of his first thoughts.

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus bear the sacred body on its winding-sheet with worshipful reverence; the eyes of the two senators fixed upon the face of the Master, watchful of the effect of every step which they make; the left hand is pendant, but the right is held by Saint John, who looks toward Mary as she presses forward with clasped hands, the Magdalene at her side folding her

in her arms. The liveliest sympathy is expressed among all these personages; for they seem to have come to the very door of the tomb, and are even bending to make its entrance.

But Titian has given to the lifeless Lord not only the perfection of his brush as to form and tint, but over the bowed head, from which still trickle drops of blood from the wounds given by the crown of thorns, and over the lacerated shoulders, has been thrown a shadow so solemn that He seems to have entered already into the gloom of His sepulchre. Low clouds, such as come at sunset, just tinged with crimson, a jutting point of the hillside with its verdure and crowned with foliage, make the garden background of the picture; the twilight gloom symbolizing the shadows of death. For years we may have this picture near us, and it will never lose its pathetic charm; while Titian gave to it his superb knowledge and his most careful skill as an act of devout love to the sorrows of the Mother and of the Son.

Among those Forty Illustrations of the

Four Gospels by Overbeck, to which we so often allude, is the Entombment—the bearing of the dead Christ to that tomb which He again and again predicted for Himself. The stars have not yet appeared, but the deep twilight has come. Light is thrown upon the sacred body, and on the head resting upon the shoulder of a disciple, from the torch held by Nicodemus at the very entrance of the tomb, into which Joseph of Arimathea is already passing, as the host to receive his Guest.

The torch flares upon the head and shoulders of the Master sleeping in death; upon the arm and pierced hand that lie so meekly on the breast; on the pierced feet that still cross each other as on that gibbet of death, resting as the limbs do, upon the shoulder of another disciple. Saint John is seen weeping, in his heart-broken way, above the right shoulder; and following close is the Blessed Virgin, one hand holding her mantle to her breast, the other laid affectionately on the arm of Mary of Bethany. Close to them follow the two other holy women; while

over the heads of this sad procession, far out on the hills round about them, mingling with the evening mists, floats the smoke of the torch in a long, slender thread of funereal vapor. To us it is most like what that procession really was, of any limned by any master whatsoever.

But Cimabue at Assisi, Duccio at Siena, have entered that gloomy cavern, wherein is the tomb hewn from a rock, in which no man as yet has been laid. Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, Saint John, have laid the body in its last resting-place, the arms straight beside Him, the feet side by side. When Mary bends over Him to give that last kiss which she can bestow upon her dead Son, Cimabue twines her arms around His swathed body; Duccio touches the dead cheek tenderly with her hand as she presses her lips to it; that farewell which has broken hearts from the time Eve pressed her lips to the cheek of the murdered Abel,—murdered, like Mary's son, by his own brother. Through Eve, death had entered into the world, and how bitter must have been her sorrow! But

the second Eve, Mary, knows that by the Fruit of her womb she has given life in the midst of death, and she says to her Beloved: "Thou art counted with them that go down to the pit, but God will not suffer my Holy One to see corruption."

O Mother of Sorrows, how deep is the night settling over Jerusalem, as, with thy three loving friends and Saint John, thy feet tread the same road trod by thy Jesus, still reddened by His blood, to be lighted up by the round Paschal moon as it rises above the now dark purple hills! "Her face is swollen with weeping; on her eyelids are the shadows of death;" and she sighs, this maiden and mother: "'He hath made me desolate and faint with sorrow.' Truly 'a bundle of myrrh is my Beloved unto me;' for I bear under my mantle the cruel thorns with which they crowned Thee, in my hands the nails that pierced Thy hands and Thy feet, and in my heart the spear that cleft Thine. Very mournful art Thou to me, O my Son Jesus!" And we, her children, do we not compassionate her and say, on our

bended knees, her Dolors Seven in our heart of hearts:

Had I been there my Lady sweet,
I would kiss the printing of Thy feet,
O dear, dear Mother Mary!*

* "Returning to Jerusalem." Austin O'Malley.

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